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# THE RAMBLE SHAMBLE CHILDREN

CHRISTINA SOONTORNVAT

*illustrated by* CALDECOTT HONOR WINNER

LAUREN CASTILLO

$23.99 CAN

There's no place like home for the five children who live in the ramble shamble house. They have everything they need with their blooming garden, their chickens and eggs—and, most important, each other. Working together is fun, and even baby Jory pitches in.

But one day they get the idea that their home isn't good enough. What if it's *too* ramble shamble? So they set off on a mission to "proper it up"—and the results aren't exactly what they're expecting . . . Maybe ramble shamble is just right for them after all!

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The illustrations for this book were created by combining ink drawings and Gelli monoprints in Adobe Photoshop.

For Peggy—C.S.

For the 5 little Sharps
and their rad parents—L.C.

Down the mountain, across the creek,
past the last curve in the road,
five children lived together
in a ramble shamble house.

There was always work to do at
the ramble shamble house.

Merra took care of the garden,
while Locky and Roozle chased off
the always-hungry blackbirds.

Finn fed the chickens,
and Jory looked after the mud.

There were always meals to share at
the ramble shamble house.
Merra picked the salad,
while Locky and Roozle pulled the carrots.
Finn fetched the eggs,
and Jory looked after the mud.

The garden always needed digging or weeding or gathering up.

There were always bugs to catch or fences to patch.

The work was hardly ever done, but doing it together made it easier.

At night, when the children were full and sleepy, they all piled into Merra's bed and listened to her spin stories about giants and dragons and brave explorers.

One afternoon, the children took a break to read a book they had found in the attic.

"Oh, that's what a proper house looks like," said Merra. "And what a pretty garden."

"Looks nice," said Finn.

"Definitely doesn't look like ours," said Roozle.

"But maybe it could," said Locky.

The next day, the children set to work turning the ramble shamble house into a proper home.

They propered up the chickens.

They propered up
a scarecrow.

They raked over all the mud puddles
because mud definitely isn't proper.

They propered up the garden.

"Proper houses always have roses," said Locky.

"We can pull up the carrots to make room for them," said Roozle.

"Perfect," said Merra. "Now all that's missing is the proper finishing touch."

"We must have a proper chandelier," said Merra.
"I think they're made of diamonds."
"This stinkbug is *shaped* like a diamond," said Locky.
"We've got plenty of those," said Roozle.

When they were finished, everything looked more proper.

But things were not quite right.

"Aah!" shrieked Merra. "One of the chickens laid an egg in my shoe!"

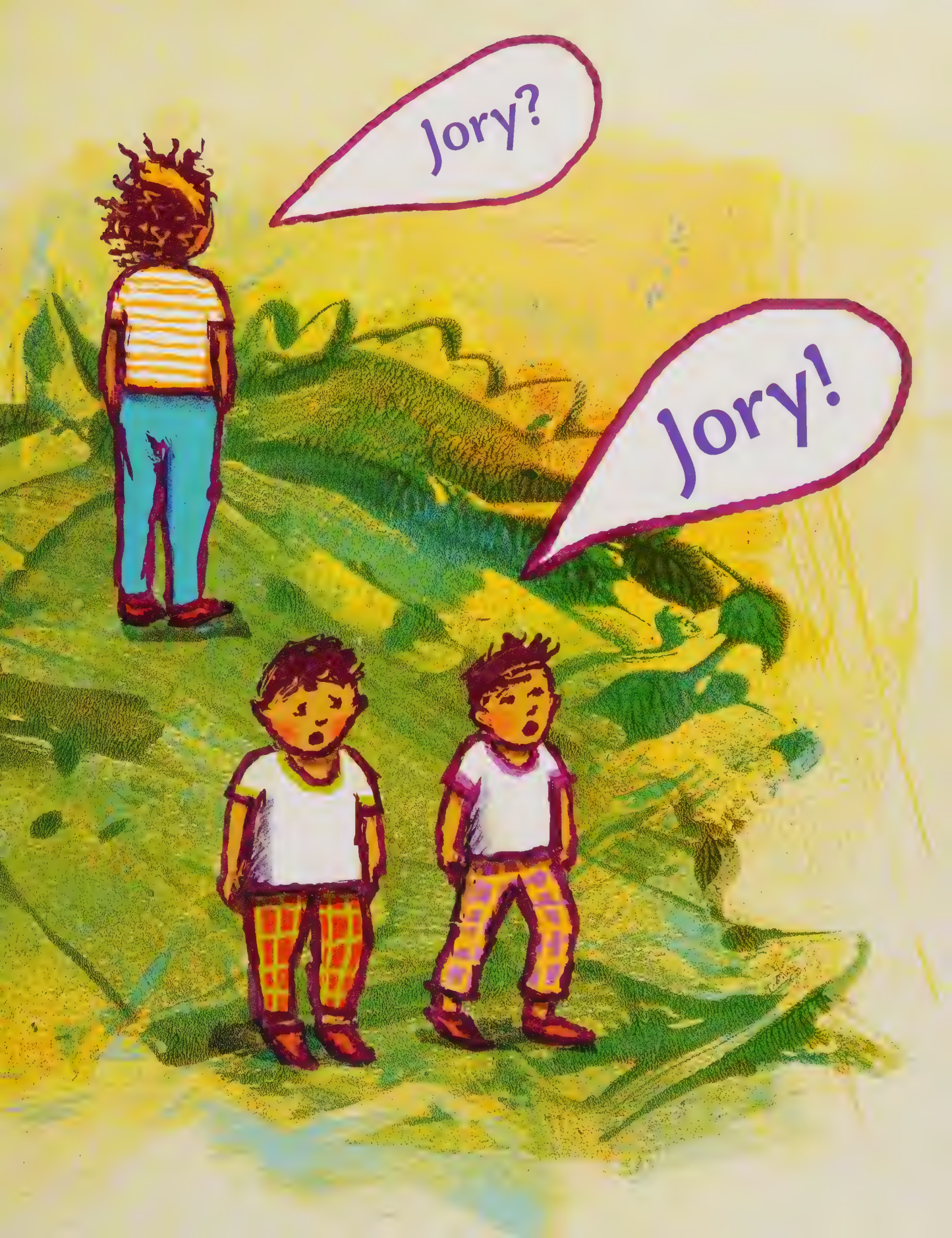
"Guess they didn't like the proper henhouse I made," said Finn.

"I can't pick any peas," said Locky. "The rosebushes keep scratching me up."

"The chandelier is flying away!" shouted Roozle.

"This isn't proper at all," groaned Merra.

"Hold on," said Finn. "Has anyone seen Jory?"
"Isn't he in the mud puddle?" said Locky.
"Oh no! We propered it up!"


Jory?
Jory!

"We have to find him before it gets dark," said Merra, swallowing back tears.

As they entered the forest, the children slowed to a tiptoe.

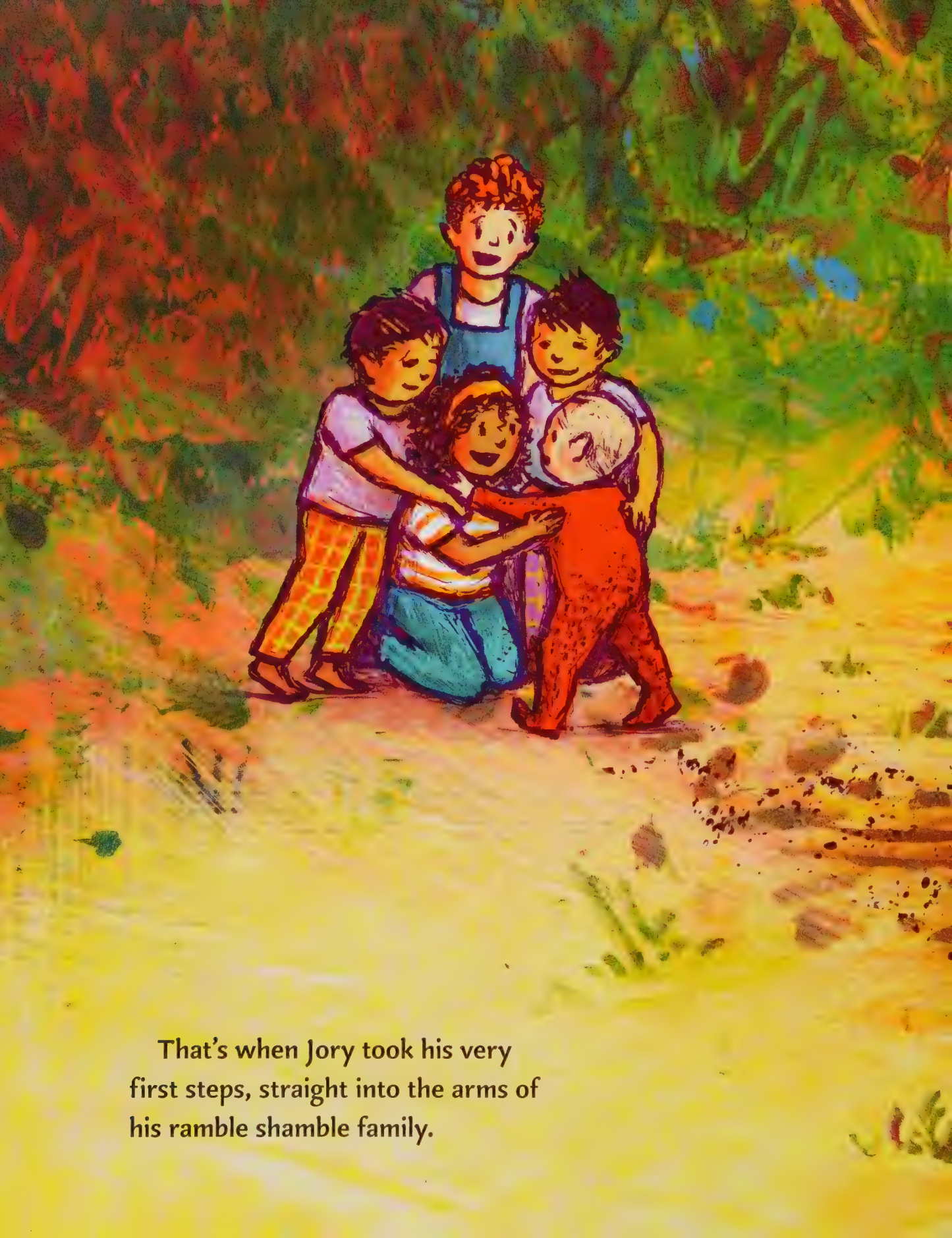
"What if a giant stole Jory?" whispered Locky.

"Or a dragon?" said Roozle.

"There's no such thing," said Merra. "Here, Finn, you go first."

They followed the trail through a dark tunnel of brambles and into a clearing . . .

"JORY!"



That's when Jory took his very first steps, straight into the arms of his ramble shamble family.

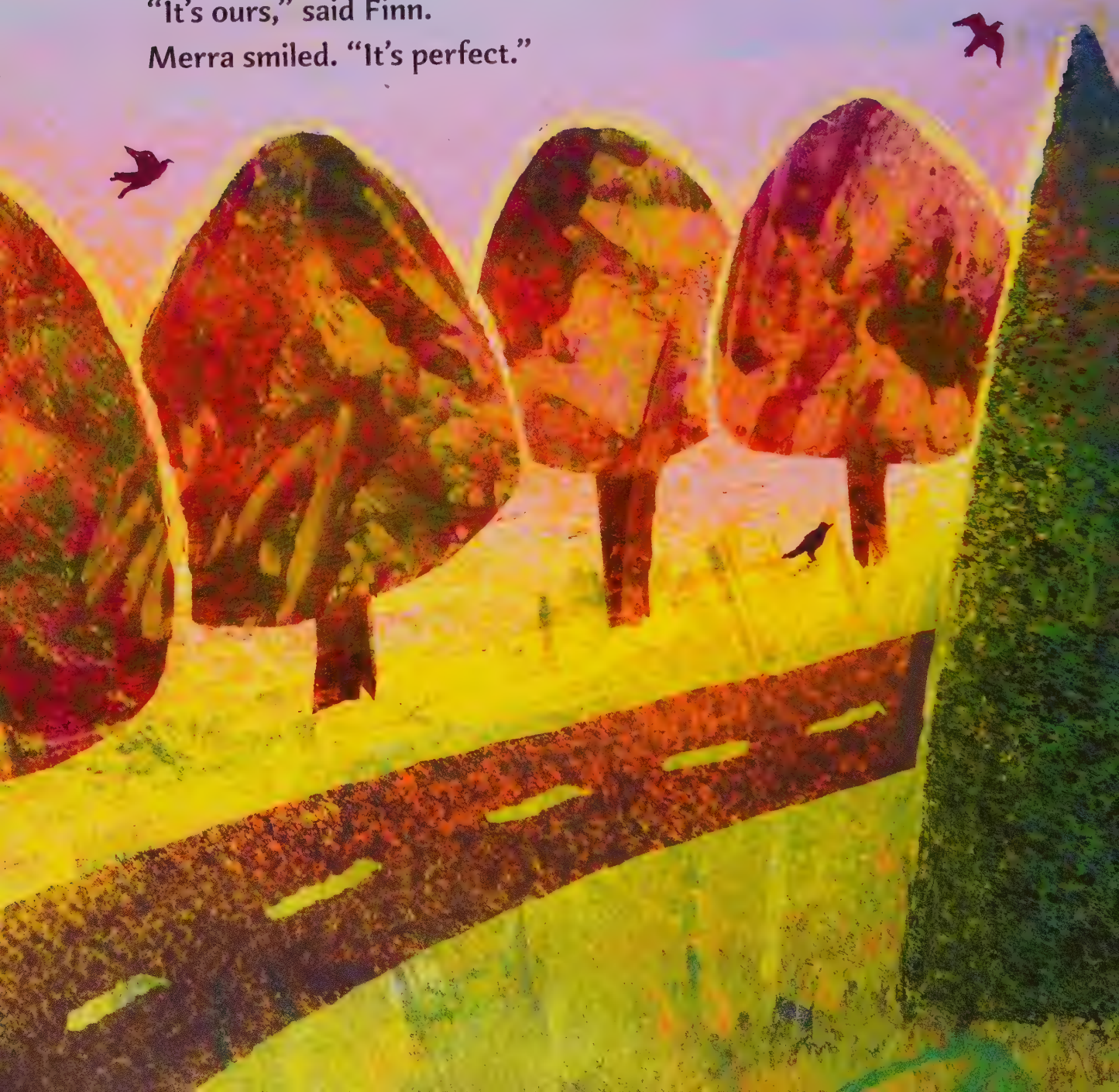
That night, the children sat together on the porch, munching snap peas. They had put everything back the way it was—especially the mud.

"Our house sure doesn't look like the one in the picture," said Roozle.

"It's ramble shamble," said Locky.

"It's ours," said Finn.

Merra smiled. "It's perfect."



The children stayed up late,
watching Jory make a proper mess.
While the stars shone overhead,
brighter than diamonds.

**CHRISTINA SOONTORNVAT**'s books include the middle grade fantasy *A Wish in the Dark*, the middle grade series The Changelings, and the early chapter book series Diary of an Ice Princess. She has degrees in mechanical engineering and science education, and spent a decade creating out-of-the-classroom learning experiences for children and families. She lives in Austin, Texas, where she loves spending time outside with her husband and their two ramble shamble daughters.

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**LAUREN CASTILLO** received her MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. She is the author and illustrator of the Caldecott Honor–winning book *Nana in the City* and the early chapter book series Our Friend Hedgehog. Lauren currently draws and dreams in her favorite ramble shamble city, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

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*Jacket art © 2021 by Lauren Castillo*
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Life is practically perfect for the Ramble Shamble Children—

and maybe that is perfectly okay!

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